SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM (Tamil Nadu): She knows only something in Tamil Nadu. ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No cross talking, please.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Well, your leader will be soon going to America. Don't worry.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA (Bihar): Has he changed his destination from Italy to America?

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Madam, the point is that it is a sign of utter failure that the Government should stand up here and say that in the State of Tamil Nadu they are not in a position to hold elections because peaceful elections are not possible. We made an exception in the case of Punjab. Now, they are saying about Tamil Nadu also. I wonder whether this kind of precedent we allow them to get away with—whether this kind of thing not be extended ultimately when they face the Lok Sabha General Elections. They may come and say the same thing and ask for another extension there also. But the fact is that there is no disruption of peace in Tamil Nadu. There was an incident, Vanniyar agitation that they talked about was an incident that took place. Since then there had been hardly any incident. First of all, I begin by saying that the Government is not at all serious in taking the House into confidence because they are not serious. There is no argument about that. Since the consultative committee was set up, I ask the Minister, how many meetings have taken place?

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: It has not been constituted despite our letters.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: It has been notified that it is going to be constituted. I thought that it was constituted. Well, I also know that no meeting has taken place in the last six months. So, there is no representation in Tamil Nadu. There is no Assembly. Of course, Members of Parliament who come from Congress (I) from Tamil Nadu, they are all, what shall I say, people without voice and hence the people of Tamil Nadu are suffering. Why is it extended for six months? I have moved an amendment saying that it should be 15th September. My friend, Shri Murasoli Maran has said that it should be 30th August. Well, we are from different parties, so there is difference in date. But broadly, we do not think that you need to have six months more because the electoral process is fundamental.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now the House stands adjourned and will meet again at 2.30 P.M.

The House then adjourned for lunch at thirty-one minutes past one of the clock.

The House re-assembled after lunch at thirty one minutes past two of the clock, **The Deputy Chairman** in the Chair.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Accident to train No. 26 Dn. Bangalore-Trivandrum Express between Sasthankotta and Perinad Stations of Southern Railway on 8-7-1988

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): Madam, I deeply regret to apprise the House of an unfortunate train accident involving 26 Dn. Bangalore Trivandrum Express at about 12.59 hrs. on 8-7-88 between Sasthankotta and Perinad stations of the Trivandrum Division of Southern Railway.

As a result of the accident 10 out of a total of 14 coaches of the train

[Shri Madhavrao Scindia]

derailed and capsized at bridge No 19 on Ashtamudi Lake. Of these, 2 coaches remained suspended from the bridge, 4 got submerged and the remaining 4 were partially submerged in the lake below.

The train engine and the coach next to it came to a stop after passing the bridge in a derailed condition. The 12th coach also derailed and the last 2 coaches remained on the track.

In this tragic accident, 105 persons lost their lives, 51 sustained grievous injuries and 150 sustained simple injuries.

Immediately on receiving the information, the Station Master of Perinad Railway Station informed the Railway Control Office at Trivandrum at about 13.10 hrs. Railway Medical Van was immediately ordered from Quilon and it left with a doctor and an Assistant Engineer at 13.35 hrs. reaching the site at 13.55 hrs. Accident Relief Train was also ordered from other locations on the Southern Railway including Trivandrum.

The local population, particularly a large number of fishermen, rendered spontaneous help and assisted in rescuing a number of passengers for which we are extremely grateful.

The local civil administration, Quilon also responded promptly and rendered most valuable assistance. Meanwhile, Naval authorities at Delhi were contacted and they alerted their base at Cochin to provide all possible help. We highly appreciate the assistance rendered by the local civil administration and the Naval authorities.

The General Manager, Southern Railway rushed to the site from Mangalore. Divisional Railway Manager, Trivandrum along with his officers and staff rushed to the site from Trivandrum and reached there by 16.05 hrs.

Member Engineering, Railway Board, who was at Madras, along with senior officers of Southern Railway flew to the site of accident. Member Mechanical, Railway Board, also proceeded to the site by air from Delhi.

Shri Moti Lal Vora Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare accompanied by the Director General of Health Services air dashed to the site with life saving drugs. Shri M. M. Jacob, Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Shri C. K. Jaffer Shariff, Union Minister of State in the Department of Coal in the Ministry of Energy and the Chief Minister, Kerala also visited the site.

I along with Chairman, Railway Board flew to the site of the accident on the 8th evening. Shri S. Krishna Kumar, Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, who is also M.P. of that area accompanied me. After visiting the site, we went to the hospitals at Quilon and Trivandrum to see the injured.

I have already announced an enhanced amount of ex-gratia relief of Rs. 10,000 each to the next of the kin of the identified dead against the normal amount of Rs. 5,000 each and Rs. 2,000 each to the grievously injured and Rs. 500 each to those with simple injuries. This is in addition to the compensation payable to the injured and the next of the kin of the deceased. The Kerala Government has been approached to nominate an *ad-hoc* Claims Commissoner for this purpose.

The Prime Minister has also announced relief of Rs. 30 lakhs for the victims of the accident from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

The Commissioner of Railway Safety, Southern Circle has already commenced his statutory inquiry.

I and my colleague Shri Mahabir Prasad and all the Railway men and women extend our deep condolences to the kith and kin of those who lost their lives in this tragic accident and sincere sympathies to the injured. I am sure that the House joins us extending heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY (Uttar Pradesh): Madam, I have only two questions to ask of the Minister. First of all, there is not even a preliminary analysis why this happened. No mention of it and I would like him to answer that. The second thing is that there has been a lot of press comment that the number of accidents in this Minister's tenure has been much more than ever before and I would like him to defend himself on that charge.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Madam, unfortunately, the statement only gives details on the setting up of a conventional inquiry committee and express ritualistic condolences for the people who are dead. The statement also gives out the list of all high dignitaries who had dashed to the place of accident to see how many people were killed. The statement is silent conspicuously, even after twenty days of the occurrence of the accident, regarding the cause of the accident. At the outset while putting my question let me straightway say one thing. The Inspector of Safety or the railway official or the official who is doing the probe is a railway man under a different department. I do not consider that an inquiry to be done by him can be impartial. Therefore, I put on record my disapproval of the inquiry being done by the Safety Commissioner. It should be done by a judge, an impartial judge, who can give out the reasons for the accident. Why I say so. Accidents of this nature had taken place on a number of occasions. A full running train had fallen into a river on a number of occasions. What are the reasons? The reasons are the railway tracks are not properly maintained, the bridges are not repaired frequently, the signals are outdated, the growing fractures on the railway track result in the safety hazards on a number of occasions. Let me ask the Minister whether he still remembers the name of Sarin Committee. A committee was appointed as far back as in 1982, the Sarin Committee. That committee had given a number of recommendations. That Sarin Committee had categorically stated that the railway was not maintaining its assets properly and that there should be proper maintenance. As far as I know, Rs. 46,000 crores are being invested for modernisation. And what is the fund being allocated for improving the tracks? Only forty per cent and that too, clubbed with the allotment for electrification. Therefore, the point that comes straight is the question of improving the railway track, making the bridges safe and improving the quality and functioning of the signals. Therefore, I would like the Minister to tell me who is maintaining the track. My information is the tracks are being maintained not by any department of railway but the tracks are being maintained and repaired by contractors and their labourers. That is the the main reason for the accidents. Our young, energetic, Minister of Railway in his bid to cut down expenses and speed up trains, has handed over the task of maintenance of the tracks to contractors. And what do the contractors do now-a-days? Neither do they have the experience nor do they have the knowhow. They do the work in a slipshod way and corrupt railway officials are there to give certificates of completion of the job. This is the main reason why the railways are becoming unsafe today. Therefore I would like the Minister to tell me why the work of maintenance of the tracks has been handed over to contractors, why it is not being done by any department of railway

[Shri Subramanian Swamy]

and whether he is ready to examine the proposal of handing it back to the engineering department of the railway.

Secondly, there is a complaint of supply of substandard materials, spurious materials, materials not needed for the purpose. What is the agency that will certify or that will guarantee the supply of properly standardised material so far as the laying of tracks is concerned? There is a report, Madam, that about 800 bridges in the country are unsafe... (*Time bell rings*)...bridges are unsafe because they have not been updated. These bridges have been constructed sixty to seventy years back and they cannot cope with the present-day fast trains. Therefore, I want the Minister to tell me what agency is which will look after the reconstruction and renovation of the bridges that have been constructed long before.

My third question is whether our energetic Minister is ready to give up his philosophy of fast trains, fast food and fast on-the-track. He is too fast and, therefore, he cannot enter the next century riding his Shatabdi Express. It will only take him to Gwalior. But there is a probability that it will also cause his dropping down into the stream which is flowing below. Therefore, my question is whether he is ready to give up his philosophy of fast trains. We want safe trains, not fast trains. We want safe railway, not fast railway. We want the Minister to give up his philosophy of fast trains because he is too fast and, therefore, a number of accidents are associated with him since be has taken to the philosophy which I would call a fast philosophy.

Madam, I want the Minister to answer categorically about the deployment of contractors; I want the Minister to answer categorically about the rehabilitation and renovation of the old bridges; and, thirdly, I want the Ministers to state categorically whether he will give up his philosophy of fast trains.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Mr. Baby.

SHRI M. A. BABY (Kerala): Thank you, Madam Deputy Chairman. First of all, I would like to keep silent for two seconds. Just two seconds. The first second goes to those who have died in this tragic accident. The second second of silence goes not for the demise of conscience in the Railway Minister, but for the absence of conscience in the Union Railway Minister I say this because we have heard about the great political morality and integrity displayed by stalwards like the late Lal Bahadur Shastri. I do not want to relate that to the present situation. But I would like to stop there and I hope that the Railway Minister himself will ponder over and act accordingly. That depends on the moral standards that one maintains.

SHRI DEBAPRASAD RAY (West Bengal): Madam, I seek your permission to make a point. It will be doing injustice to the honourable Minister if one does not highlight the fact that after the accident took place, he tendered his resignation, but he was persuaded and prevailed upon to withdraw his resignation... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI M. A. BABY: Madam this is wrong... (*Interruptions*)...This is wrong. when did he tender his resignation We do not know... (*Interruptions*)...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We do not know.... (*Interruptions*) .... ..

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH (West Bengal): Madam, is it ture that he tendered his resignation, but was persuaded by the Prime Minister to withdraw it? (*Interruptions*).

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV (Maharashtra): Madam, I would like to request the honouarble Member not to make politics out of that, but only to seek clarifications... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: He was only referring to the resignation by the late Lal Bahadur Shastri.

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV: But the late Lal Bahadur Shastri was our partyman and he was the Prime Minister from our party. Don't worry... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, it was a grievous accident. So, let us not make it a personal thing. It is not necessary. Let us go into the issues only... (*Interruptions*)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, please.

SHRI M. A. BABY: Madam, in the statement, he first get the explanation.

AN HON. MEMBER: He should be mature... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI M A. BABY: I shall try. Thank you for your advice. But you better advise your Minister to be a little more mature.

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV: He is very much mature. He will lookafter himself. He is quite capable of looking after.....

SHRI M. A. BABY: That is what I am looking forward to seeing. I would just like to bring out the maturity of your Minister from this written statement. I would first like to request amendment of the statement in the first sentence itself. In the first instance he has mentioned about the number of bogies. In the order of preference for the railway minister, the number of deaths comes in the fourth paragraph. First the railway minister mentions about the number of bogies that fell into the water, the number of bogies destroyed and things like that in paragraph 2 and 3. Then comes the number of deaths. This is the order that the Railway Minister maintains when such a tragic and traumatic accident takes place. This is the maturity the Central Government is showing. This is the first thing I would like to tell. My humble submission is that the first sentence can be re-formulated, mentioning that more than 105 people have died in the Trivandrum Division of Southern Railway. That way the statement can be made a little more humane. Not to speak of maturity, it can be made a little more humane by making such an amendment.

Now, coming to the other formulations of the statement, I would also like to mention another lacuna that I would not have noticed otherwise but for my presence at the accident spot immediately and we could follow other developments in Kerala during the accident and afterwards. There was a controversy. We are thankful to the Railway Minister and other Central Ministers from Kerala who had come to Kerala to the accident spot We are thankful to them. Various things were announced by both the Ministers Soindiaji and Krishna Kumarji. But then the press correspondents who did not have any political affiliations, asked as to why after praising many sections of people for prompt rescue operations like the fisherman and other local population —we should congratulate them for their timely intervention; but for their intervention many more people would have died and they deserve congratulations and the Ministers rightly congratulated them; the Ministers congratulated the Collector also, the Administration also—why there was no mention about the State Government. As a matter of fact, the State Government almost the whole Cabinet, reached there immediately and they were the ones who were there on the spot immediately. But there was no mention about them. This was reported in the press. And one Minister had the maturity, to reply that when they mentioned about the District Collector the State Government also includes that: As if the State Government is under the District Collector. This is the maturity shown by the Minister.

[Shri M. A. Baby]

Anyway, now coming to the question, I would first of all like to ask: Does the Ministry or the Central Government have any report as a result of the inquiry that has been conducted? We have come to know about certain things. Just before the bridge where the accident took place there is a curve. In every curve there has to be a super elevation. It is due to the gravitational rails that the train is not turning upside down. Everybody knows it. That is why it is there. Some information has come out that at that particular spot in the curve there was not sufficient super-elevation. This information has come out as a result of a preliminary inquiry. And it may be called an irony of history or irony of events that a gruesome train accident takes place in a remote place in a remote State. For those who are ruling from Delhi Kerala is a remote State. I would like to know whether such an accident took place due to lack of maintenance or due to lack of sufficient super elevation. At the same time a super luxury train was to be introduced between Delhi and Jhansi running through the constituency of the hon. Railway Minister. This may be an irony of history that the inauguration of this super luxury train had to be cancelled due to this tragic accident. There had been an announcement in the 15.00 hour news broadcast that a high-power team including the Central Railway Minister was going to visit the site by a special aircraft. The accident took place at 12.59 and at 8.00 P.M. there was an announcement that the team including the Railway Minister had left Delhi by a special aircraft. We would like to know when exactly the information was received at Delhi, when exactly the team started from Delhi and when exactly they landed at Trivandrum.

Secondly, we would like to know whether the Central Government is going to continue the same system of giving the responsibility of maintenance of the tracks to contractors even after this tragedy. This point has been elaborated by my respected colleague.

Regarding the inquiry which has been started, I would like to know whether the Central Government had any discussion with the State Government about the *modus operandi* of the inquiry. The State Government has requested that there should be a judicial inquiry into the whole matter. But the Central Government is having another inquiry. Was it after having consultation with the State Government or was it a unilateral announcement of the Central Government? I would like to know this. This is a very important thing.

Thirdly, we have come to know that some 8 days ago, i.e. on 30th June, the Guard and the Driver of the Madras Mail had registered a written complaint pointing out that when the train passed through the accident site, there was an unusual jerk. This was pointed out by the Guard and the Driver on 30th June. The accident took place later. I would like to know whether it is correct or not. If it is correct, then what were the steps taken by the Railway authorities to find out whether it was due to lack of track maintenance, or due to lack in super elevation or any other thing like that? The general belief is that this accident has taken place due to lack of maintenance of track, lack in super elevation, poor condition of the bridge and poor condition of the bogey. There are many levers joining different parts of the train. If any iron lever falls down, that will lead to derailment. We know that condemning the bogies outright is not at all a practice of the Railway Ministry. If at all they condemn a bogey, that is not taken out of use. That is condemned for the people of the condemned areas. Not only South, but North-East is also condemned. It is generally said that if some bogeys are condemned from the North, first they will be sent to the North-East and when they are condemned from there, they will be sent to the South. This is a known thing.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN (Tamil Nadu): I strongly object to it. South

should get priority in the case of condemned bogeys, also.

SHRI M. A. BABY: I would like to know about the life of bogeys. How many bogeys which have outlived are still in use? I hope that the Minister will tell us about that. Madam, I do not want to go into the allocation to States like Kerala in the Railway Budget which we have discussed many times. And this also tells upon why such accidents take place more in Kerala.

Thirdly, Madam, during the last two years, time, in between Kottayam and Quilon where the present accident took place, there had been five rail derailments. Is it a fact or not? If it is a fact, let the authorities look into this fact. (*Time bell rings*) Madam, I do not want to mention anything about the ridiculous statement that has been made by one of the Ministers after coming to Kerala, ridiculing the State Government and ridiculing some of the Ministers on the basis of their reaction because I do not want to stoop to the level of that particular Minister.

Madam, my hon. collegue referred to the Sarin Committee Report. I want to know whether any recommendations of that Report have been seriously followed and implemented by the Ministry. I hope there will be an explanation on that. Now, coming to compensation to the affected people, the kith and kin of the deceased, I request the Minister to take steps to give at least employment to those who are eligible from the families of those who have died in this accident apart from giving some money. Whatever money is being given, we know that that cannot compensate the loss of life. So, at least, one educated or able-bodied person each from the families of those who have died should be provided with some employment in the Railways.

Lastly, Madam, I have mentioned about the rescue operations which were led by the State Government also, apart from bringing in the Navy and all that which, of course, was with the help of the Central Government. When all these things are mentioned in the statement, one can find from the statement that the Chief Minister has been mentioned after many Railway officials and the State Ministers at the Centre. Without any disrespect to the Ministers who have been mentioned above the name of the Chief Minister, at least protocol maintenance demands that the State Chief Ministers should be considered over and above the State Ministers at the Centre. In the protocol order, Cabinet Ministers and State Chief Ministers stand seventh and the State Ministers at the Centre stand tenth. (*Time bell rings*) So, I may leave it as a lack-adaisical way in which the whole thing is drafted. But this is unfair.

With these words, Madam, I request the Minister to come out with concrete replies to the pointed questions that I have raised.

श्री कैलाशपति मिश्र (बिहार) : उपसभापति महोदया, मंत्री महोदय के वक्तव्य में यह देखकर बड़ा दुख होता है कि जब 30 जून को त्रिवेन्द्रम मद्रास मेल के चीफ गार्ड धनराजन ने जैसा कि माननीय सदस्य श्री बेबी ने बताया, लगभग उसी स्पीड की ट्रेन उसी रास्ते से ले जा रहे थे तो उसी प्वाइंट के ऊपर इतनी जोरसे झटका लगा कि उन्होंने संतानम कोटे नाम स्टेशन पर जहां कि वह गाडी रुकती नहीं है उसने गाड़ी रुकवाई और स्टेशन पर कांप्लेंट करवाई । मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि उस कांप्लेंट का क्या हुआ जिसका कि अभी तक पता नहीं लग रहा है । वक्तव्य में उसका संकेत भी होता तो भरोसा होता कि आज अभी जांच हो रही है और सचमुच में वह न्यायपूर्ण जांच होती । मैं प्रश्न पूछना चाहता हूं कि क्या यह सत्य है कि चीफ गार्ड धनराजन ने उस स्टेशन के ऊपर जहां कि त्रिवेन्द्रम मद्रास मेल नहीं रुकती है उसको रुकवाकर कांप्लेंट की कि ट्रैक में कुछ न कुछ खराबी है, इसके बारे में मंत्री महोदया को क्या जानकारी है ?

दूसरा बिन्दु जिसका मैं उल्लेख करना चाहता हूं कि वह यह है कि इतनी बड़ी रेल दुर्घटना हो जाने के बाद जांच का तरीका क्या होता है ? रेलवे सेफटी कमिश्नर को जांच करने के लिये लगा दि या जाता

[श्री कैलाश पति मिश्र]

ऊपर से एक लेवल लग जाता है कि यह 3.00 P.M. जांच कांफिडेंशियल है। समाचार पत्रों के द्वारा या वक्तव्य द्वारा केवल इतना समाचार आता है कि ह्यूमन फैल्योर के कारण, मैकेनेकिल फैल्योर के कारण, आपरेशनल फैल्योर के कारण इस प्रकार की घटना घटी है। क्या मतलब है इस जांच का? जांच होती है और चार्ज भी लगाये जाते हैं लेकिन कभी संसद के अन्दर पूरी जांच, पूरी प्रक्रिया के साथ जो जांच हुई है डिसकशन के लिये आती नहीं। रेलवे सेफ्टी कमिश्नर होता कौन है या रेलवे इंस्पेक्टर होता कौन है। वह भी रेलवे का पदाधिकारी होता है रेलवे का कर्मचारी होता है। स्वाभाविक है कि उसमें से अगर किसी की गलती के कारण इतनी बड़ी जघन्य घटना घट गयी तो उसे बचाने की एक प्रवृत्ति रहती है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या आप यह परिपाटी शुरू कराने के लिये तैयार हैं कि संसद अनेक विषयों की चर्चा कर सकती है लेकिन जब किसी घटना की पूरी जांच रिपोर्ट आती है तो वह संसद के अन्दर डिसकशन के लिये क्यों नहीं आ सकती। क्या आप उसको कराने के लिये तैयार हैं?

मैं एक बात का और उल्लेख करना चाहता हूं। मेरी समझ में नहीं आता कि यह जो संख्या बताई जाती है कि 100 लोग मारे गये या 105 लोग मारे गये इसका आधार क्या है। जो लाशें आपके हाथ में प्राप्त हो गयीं उनकी गिनती करके आप संख्या बताते है या जल के अंतराल में से सड़ी हुई, गली हुई लाशें निकाली गयी या पानी के प्रवाह में जो लाशें बह गयी उनकी गिनती भी आप करते हैं क्या? इतनी महत्वपूर्ण ट्रेन जिसका एक डिब्बा भी इतना लम्बा-चौड़ा होता है उसमें कितने ही यात्री यात्रा करते होंगे उसके नौ के नौ डिब्बे पानी के अंतराल में जाकर डूबे गये, अनेक घंटे, 48 घंटे, 36 घंटे, 24 घंटे तक पानी के अन्दर जो डिब्बे पड़े रह गये, अगर कोई भी मानव अगर घंटे भर से पानी के अन्दर पड़ा रह जायेगा तो उसके जीवित रहने की संभावना किस प्रकार से रह सकती है। यह आधार कि 105 मरे या 100 मरे यह बात मेरी समझ में आ सकती है जब आप इतना ही कहें कि आप को इतनी ही लाशें प्राप्त हुई। लेकिन इस पूरे कांड को लेकर मत कहिये कि केवल 105 लोगों की मृत्यु हो गयी। मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि क्या इसका भी कोई आंकड़ा है जो लाशें मिली नहीं, गुमनाम हैं स्टेशनो पर जितनी टिकटों की बिक्री हुई क्या उसकी जांच करते हैं? किस आधार पर आप मृतकों की संख्या बताते हैं यह मैं आपसे जानना चाहता हूं।

अन्त में मैं कहना चाहता हूं, मैं कोई व्यक्तिगत आलोचना करने के लिये खड़ा नहीं हुआ हूं लेकिन रेलवे मंत्री महोदय को कहना चाहता हूं कि संपूर्ण भारत की रेलें आपकी दृष्टि में रहनी चाहियें। अनेक कारणों से इसमें संदेह पैदा हो रहे हैं। अगर व्यापक दृष्टि नहीं रही, व्यापक छान बीन करने की व्यवस्था नहीं रही, हर छोटे मोटे संकेत के संबंध में जांच करने की व्यवस्था नहीं रही तो आगे भी दुर्घटना रुक नहीं सकेगी। इन्हीं बिन्दुओं और इन्हीं प्रश्नों के साथ मैं समाप्त कर रहा हूं।

SHRI M. KADHARSHA (Tamil Nadu): Madam, first of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved. No doubt this is a ghastly accident on the Indian railways, but I will not demand that the hon Minister should resign. Ministers may come and Minister may go, but what I am more concerned is that there should be an end to these accidents on our railways. I have no doubt in the efficiency and competence of our hon. Minister. He has done his best to improve the Indian railways, but unfortunately in the recent past a series of railway accidents have taken place and this is giving a very bad impression for the good work done by him.

Madam, whenever there is an accident the Government constitutes a committee and generally the Commissioner of Railway Safety is appointed to make an inquiry into the cause of the accident. But after some time this is totally forgotten and the report of the Commissioner is not made public and we do not know

what action has been taken by the Government on the report.

If we go through the various accidents, we find that there is a set pattern of such accidents, whether it is the accident of the Tamil Nadu Express which took place in July last or the Samastipur accident of 1981 or the accident when Dakshin Express was involved some time before. The pattern of the accidents is same and this is where the Railways have failed. Whenever there is an accident, the Government has to find out the reason and also how to prevent it in future. Madam, it has been said that the bridges and the railway tracks have become obsolete at many places. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what is the number of bridges that have become obsolete and what is the total length of the railway track which has outlived its life and the steps the Government is taking for the renewal of these railway tracks and reconstruction of such bridges. I would also like to know whether any periodical check is conducted to certify worthiness of these bridges and railway track.

Even after 20 days now, the exact figure of casualties has not been given clearly. The hon. Minister has given the figure of 105 as dead. But Doordarshan which is also a Government concern, reported that the number of persons died was more than 150. I would seek a clarification from the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that the State Government of Kerala made written complaints about poor maintenance of railway track and if so, what action was taken on that complaint. Now it is said the Government is trying to put the blame on the driver of the train because it is reported that the train was over-speeding and there was a four-degree curve near the bridge. I would like to know whether overspeeding is also one of the reasons for the accident.

Finally, I would like to say that crew in the trains is over-worked. They have to work for more than 12 hours in the train and I would like to know whether this also is part of the reason for frequent accidents.

In the end I would also like to know how much compensation has been paid to the kith and kin of the deceased.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (West Bengal): Generally we expected that the statement will give some indication of the reasons for this tragic accident. But there is no indication in the whole statement about the possible grounds for this tragedy. You know, generally, these accidents take place either due to human failure or mechanical failure or the operational failure. But nothing has been mentioned as to which of these factors was responsible for this accident.

I have got with me a copy of the statement from a Minister of the Kerala Government. He has made a public statement saying "There is hardly any track maintenance and bogies used for the Island Express are not meant for passenger traffic. I have had discussions with the Southern Railway authorities about poor track maintenance and, above all, about using vintage coaches for the Express train in Trivandrum." This is what he said. He is also incharge of Railway service in the State. This is a new department I think which the Kerala Government has instituted. I do not know whether in any other State, they have a separate Minister for this. Anyway, the Minister in Kerala Government in charge of railway services has said this on the question of maintenance and the condition of tracks in Kerala. He has made a public statement. This public statement has also been corroborated. I do not know whether the hon. Minister had time to look into the 56th Report of the Estimates Committee (1983-84). The Estimates Committee have given a voluminous report bringing out certain very startling facts. I think any responsible Railway Minister would take note of this report and take corrective action.

Instead of quoting from this report, I would like to mention some of the points which have been made by the Estimates

[Shri Chitta Basu]

Committee. This Committee was presided over by Shri Bansi Lal. According to this report, during the Sixth Five-Year Plan, 1980—85, the total length of railway track which needed renewal was 29,084 kms. About 30,000 kms. of track required renewal. The report also says that tracks have been detected in over 11,000 kms. of track and that the work relating to the repair of tracks had been entrusted to contractors. Madam, according to the Sikri Committee, 3,500 bridges have been identified as dengerous. According to this report, 2,539 bridges are dangerous and 202 of them are more dangerous. This report points out that the automatic signalling system is not foolproof. It also points out that 3,286 coaches need replacement, that most of the rolling stock is overaged and that there is no proper maintenance.

Madam, it is also a known fact that the running staff are very much overworked. The loco running staff have to work for more than fifteen hours without any rest, witout any break. (*Time-bell rings*) I will take only a few seconds to complete. The loco running staff have been agitating for the introduction of eight-hour duty but the Government have not redressed their grievance. Facts with me show that more than 600 loco workers have already been dismissed under the proivsion of article 311(2)(b) of the Constitution.

My first question to the hon. Minister is, whether he has gone through the 56th Report of the Estimates Committee. If so, I would like to know whether he has taken any action to correct the deficiencies pointed out in the report and what are those corrective measures taken? Secondly, can the Government indicate certain preliminary reasons for this grim and tragic accident? Thirdly, I would like to know whether the Government is going to take some action to see that the duty hours of the loco running staff are revised which will not require them to work for more than eight hours so that the possibility of railway accidents will diminish and ultimately accidents can be done away with.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY (*Tamil Nadu*): Madam, I express my grief and convey my condolences to the members of the bereaved families who have lost their kith and kin. This train accident at the Ashtamudi lake in Kerala has sent shock waves throughout the country. But Madam, is it not a fact that in the last two years five goods trains have derailed between Quilon and Kottayam? This shows that there has been no proper track maintenance. Particularly, the bogies used in this train, in this ill-fated train, were more or less condemned and not meant for passenger traffic. Is it a fact that the couplings of the coaches were very much defective? Madam, as usual, the Railway Ministry has come out with a statement that an inquiry has been ordered. The Commissioner, Railway Safety, will institute an inquiry. What happened to the previous inquiries when there was a disaster in 1981 on the Kosi river in Bihar, when there was another accident last year at Manchiriyal in Andhra Pradesh when Dakshin Express capsized under a flooded bridge, killing 60 people? Is it a fact that these reports of the Commissioner of Railway Safety, after the inquiries are over, are kept guarded-secrets? May I know whether some years back the Central Safety Committee of the Railways formulated a number of long-term and short-term measures and recommended that the reports of the inquiry should be made public? For what reasons are the reports kept a guarded secret? Is it because the Commissioner of Railway Safety is not directly under the control of the Railway Minister? Does he come under the control of the Civil Aviation Ministry? If he comes under the control of the Railway Ministry, the Parliament is entitled to know the outcome of the inquiry, the Parliament should discuss all these reports. All these reports should be laid on the Table of the two Houses of Parliament. Otherwise, there is no use of these reports at all. How would the people or Members of Parliament come to know the outcome of these reports, what were the precise reasons for the disaster and so on?

Madam, there is one more point. When the safety rules are flouted, what is the

use of Commissioner of Railway Safety himself ordering an inquiry? Therefore, it is very important that there should be a judicial enquiry, an independent enquiry by a High Court Judge. This is my demand and I would like to know the response from the Minister.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): Madam Deputy Chairman, I share the anxiety and grief of the hon. Members relating to the tragic accident that took place and which has taken more than 105 lives recently. Madam, before I seek clarifications I would like to thank the local population and also the fishermen of the locality who came spontaneously to the spot and rescued several lives. Belongings and lives of several persons have been saved by them.

Madam, I take one second for my learned friend Baby because his family landed safety though they were travelling in the same train, but I take another second for his comment. Immediately after the accident took place all the officials and Central Ministers went to the spot. They went with a team of officials and rescue operations were immediately started. Unfortunately, Madam, the local MLA of that constituency, whose marriage was celebrated with pomp and show and the State Ministers including the Chief Minister, who went to attend the marriage, were informed about the accident. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUTPA: What is the clarification in this? Who is to clarify this? (*Interruptions*) Absolutely sub-standard. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM (Tamil Nadu): It has been reported in the press that the same MLA visited the spot with garland!

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The local M.L.A.s' marriage was to be celebrated The lady M.L.A.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: It is absolutely an expression of bad taste and indecency... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The local M.L.A. was informed of the accident four hours earlier. The marriage was celebrated luxuriously.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: You please tell the Minister. You are indirectly attacking the Minister.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: The most luxurious marriage of the century took place in Gwalior.

SHRI V NARAYANASAMY: The Chief Minister went to the marriage of the local M.L.A. along with his Cabinet colleagues at that time...Kindly bear with me. I have the right to speak.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: By the time the officers of the State administration went and informe him....He must have been the guest of Mr. Karan Singh.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: They informed him that there had been a major train accident, lots of lives had been lost, bogies had been submerged in the lake and there was the likelihood of more than 500 persons having die...

SHRI DEBA PRASAD RAY: Madam, on a point of order.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no, let him explain.

SHRI DEBA PRASAD RAY: Can you permit any Member to just travel through and speak?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, the Chief Minister and other Cabinet Ministers actually attended the marriage, wasted time for four hours in the marriage hall and then they went to the accident site. Kindly see the response of the State administration...

SHRI M. A. BABY: All these untruths should be removed from the records.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: People of Kerala know the truth. Madam, another important fact is...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: It is shameful to indulge in insinuations on such a subject of national disaster. Absolutely shameful.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, they took their convenient time to visit the accident spot. That shows ...(*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. Mr. Narayanasamy, now you please proceed to the other point.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: He is speaking absolutely irrelevant things.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I have another point also.

SHRI M. A. BABY: All the Malayalam dailies and journals have praised the role of the local M.L.A. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Madam, are we discussing the conduct of the local M.L.A.?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Madhya Pradesh): Madam, are we discussing the conduct of the Minister or the local M.L.A.?

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: What is going on? What is this?

...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : आपको मालूम है, महोदया, वह महिला एम० एल० ए० है, वह उन पर हमला कर रहे हैं।...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: The question is, the topic for discussion is not the conduct of the MLA, whether the date of marriage was finalized by somebody else and if the marriage date could not be changed. Why should you allow these things to be discussed here?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Narayanasamy, please...(*Interruptions*) ... You are seeking clarifications. So, you now proceed to another point...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, in Kerala, the Minister who is in charge of railway administration in that Assembly disowned his responsibility. He said that he was not the person to answer questions relating to the accident that took place. This is the pathetic condition in Kerala. The issue was raised there... (*Interruptions*)... Therefore, I would like to seek a clarification from the honourable Minister. The Kerala Government has been given the power to decide the quantum of compensation. It should be removed from them and the Railway Ministry itself should decide that. It should not be given to the Kerala Government because of their indifferent attitude...(*Interruptions*)...

Another aspect I would like to ask the honourable Minister is that the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Southern Circle, has already commenced the statutory inquiry, as the honourable Minister has stated. The Minister is dynamic; he is doing his job perfectly. The accusation by the Opposition is baseless. But I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether any interim report has been submitted by the Commissioner of Railwy Safety and, if so, what was the finding given by him. Thank you, Madam.

DR. SIVAJI YALAMANCHILI (Andhra Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chair-person, even 20 days after the accident, no cause is mentioned, whether it is maintenance defect or operational defect or somthing else? Nothing is mentioned. It is reported that Mr. Paul, Driver of that train, was secluded. Was there any revelation by the Driver to the officials? The honourable Minister may, clarify. It is also reported that some supporting girders on both sides of the bridge were lacking, and nothing is mentioned in this regard. As mentioned by Mr. Baby, in the last two years, about five goods trains had derailed between Quilon and Kottayam. Likewise, in Andhra Pradesh also, at Mancherial in the Adilabad district, quite a good number of accidents have been taking place. Is the Railway Ministry taking any specific measures to prevent such accidents in such vulnerable places? I suppose there is a Research and Development wing, and what

is that dpartment doing? Are they coming out with any innovations to prevent such accidents? These are the points on which I seek clarification from the honourable Minister.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: Madam Deputy Chairman, at the outset I express my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. This unfortunate and tragic accident occurred on 8-7-1988. Unfortunately, our Minister has not come forward to mention any reason for this tragic accident. Of course, the accident is not due to any natural calamity like heavy flood, rain or storm. If the accident is due to any natural calamity, it is an unpredictable one. But if it is an accident other than a natural calamity, then the Ministry is accountable for this accident. The hon. Minister has stated in his report that nearly 105 persons have lost their lives and 200 persons have sustained simple and grievous injuries. Madam, if you go through the press report, as mentioned by my dearest friend, Mr. Narayanasamy, more than 300 persons have lost their lives. To find out the fact, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many passengers travelled in the ten bogies which capsized in that accident. Then only we can find out the reason.

Mr. Narayanasamy criticised the local MLA that he was not responsive or responding to help the people who were affected by the accident. But the press report says that the local MLA kept to the spot with garland on and helped all the people to the maximum extent. But, unfortunately, our friend, Mr. Narayanasamy is misleading the House by giving false information to this august House. (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No cross-talking please.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: In this report the hon. Minister has appreciated the service rendered by the local fishermen. We too compliment the fishermen. They went to the spot before the railway authorities. They must be thanked and their service appreciated. At the same time, there should be some remunerative gesture on the part of the Ministry. There should be *ex-gratia* payment to the fishermen who came forward to do the rescue operations.

Then, the hon. Minister has mentioned the Ministers from the Centre who have visited the spot and the officials who have visited the spot. At the same time, deliberately he has omitted the service rendered by the State Government. Even he has not mentioned the name of the chief Minister of the State. He has mentiond in a casual manner. It is the responsibility of the State Government to protect the railways. Unless due respect is given to the State Government, how can you expect due service from the State Government? It is in bad taste and a bad practice on the part of the Ministry to give this type of statement in this House. At least in should be avoided in future.

Then, it has been mentioned in the statement that there is an order for a statutory enquiry. Madam, it is not enough because it is a fatal accident. The Minister himself has not stated the reason for this accident. So, as stated by my friend, Mr. Gopalsamy, a judicial enquiry is imperative and imminent.

With these words, I conclude my speech seeking clarifications.

श्री वीरेन्द्र वर्मा (उत्तर प्रदेश) : आदरणीय, उपसभापति महोदया, 8 जुलाई को हुई रेल की दुखद दुर्घटना पर देशवासियों को भारी दुख है। संभवतः रेल मंत्री महोदय ने भी उनके दुख में अपने आप को शरीक करते हुए त्यागपत्र देने की घोषणा की थी।

महोदया, अच्छा और बेहतर यह था कि दुर्घटना के कारणों पर प्रकाश डाला जाता। रेलवे पुल खराब था, रेलवे ट्रैक खराब था, ट्रेन की स्पीड अधिक थी, किस कारण से गाड़ी में ब्रेक लगे या कौनसा वह कारण था जिसके कारण यह दुर्घटना घटी? रेडियो और टेलिविजन सुनने और देखने से यह घोषणा भर सरकार की और से की गई थी कि रेल का पुल टूटा था और गाड़ी की बोगीज उस में गिरीं। माननीय मंत्री जी यह मालूम करें कि क्या इस प्रकार की घोषणा

(श्री वीरेन्द्र वर्मा)

आल इंडिया रेडियो और टेलिविजन से की गयी थी ? अगर की गयी थी तो आज उसकी चर्चा क्यो नही हुई और पब्लिक को गुमराह क्यों किया गया ? पहला प्रश्न तो मेरा माननीय मंत्रीजी से यह है । दूसरे जो जाच अधिकारी की बात है और माननीय मंत्रीजी पहुंचे, दूसरे मंत्री भी गए, केन्द्रीय शासन और स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के मंत्री भी पहुचे । अधिकारी भी बहुत गए लेकिन किसी ने भी और आज के मंत्री जी के स्टेटमेंट से भी यह जाहिर नहीं होता कि इसका कारण क्या था । कुछ तो प्रकाश मिलना ही चाहिए था इस दुखद दुर्घटना के कारणों पर और फिर जांच—ऐसा लगता है कि रूटीन में इसकी जाच हो रही है । दुर्घटना बहुत भयंकर घटी और उसकी रेलवे सेफ्टी कमिश्नर द्वारा जांच की जा रही है । मेरा पुरजोर आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी से निवेदन है कि इसकी न्यायिक जांच होनी चाहिए और प्रारम्भ मे ही उन्हें न्यायिक जांच की घोषणा करनी चाहिए थी जिससे कि सभी लोगों को संतोष होता । ऐसी दुखद घटनाओं के मामले में भी आपस में दोषारोपण किया जाना, यह निहायत दुख की और शर्म की बात है । दुर्घटना केरल में हो गई तो केरल की सरकार को बर्खास्त कर दिया जाए । एम.एल.ए. जो अपना स्पष्टीकरण नही देते तो उनकी चर्चाएं आई । इन बातों को सुनकर दुख हुआ, मैं इन्हें एप्रिसिएट नही कर सकता ।

फिर माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने बयान में बताया कि जो मृतक है उन्हें पाच हजार के मुकाबले दस हजार की सहायता की गई । जिसकी जिन्दगी चली गई उसके लिए दस हजार रुपये कुछ मायने नहीं रखते । मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से निवेदन करूंगा कि मृतकों को एक लाख रुपया और जो गंभीर रूप से घायल हैं उनको पचास हजार से अधिक दिया जाए, यह मेरा माननीय मंत्री जी से निवेदन है ।

और इसपर भी जरा प्रकाश डालने की कृपा करेंगे कि क्या अभी तक कोई जिम्मेदारी किसी के ऊपर फिक्स की गई है ? किसकी नेग्लीजेन्स से इतनी बड़ी दुर्घटना घटी ? और अगर जिम्मेदारी नहीं फिक्स की गई तो उसके क्या कारण है । जब माननीय मंत्री जी वहा गए थे तो जिन मछुआरो ने सहायता की, रक्षा की, मृतकों को निकाला है उन्होंने भी बताया होगा कि किस कारण, कैसे-कैसे यह हुआ है । ट्रेक भी माननीय मंत्री जी ने देखा होगा कि ट्रेक की कैसे स्थिति थी और अगर ट्रेक की कमी के कारण ये पटरी से उतरी है तो जिम्मेदारी उन लोगों पर फिक्स की जाए जो रिस्पांसिबल हैं । आपके इस्तीफा देने से काम नहीं चलता । जिम्मेदारी उनकी फिक्स कीजिए जो साउथ रेलवे के जिम्मेदार अधिकारी हैं कर्मचारी हैं और उनके खिलाफ एक्शन लें । यह मेरा निवेदन है और मुझे उम्मीद है कि माननीय मंत्री जी इस पर प्रकाश डालेंगे ।

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Arangil Sreedharan. This is your maiden clarification.

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN (Kerala): Madam Deputy Chairman, while expressing my heartfelt anguish and deep sorrow at the human tragedy of great intensity that took place in my State, I have to record a protest also. When tragedies like this take place, we have to blame ourselves for that, but what shocked me was that this tragedy was being exploited by the Government of India and the Government-owned media for political purposes. All India Radio and television gave graphic and colourful description of what happened there when Central Ministers visited there. State Ministers were blacked out. And the State Ministers who came there from the wedding of the local MLA had rushed to the spot and took all effective action. My request to the Government of India and the Administration is not to exploit such a situation for political purposes. Only vultures exploit dead bodies. Does the Minister know the real state of affairs in the railways in my State? Dilapidated compartments run on superannuated tracks. It is with great apprehension we travel in trains in Kerala. Most of them

are ghost trains. If this trend continues that day is not distant when greater tragedies will occur. In the railway map, as my esteemed colleague, Mr. Baby has pointed out, first comes upper India, of course upper India is India, but real India is South India. Then, comes some other major States in South. Finally, comes my State and when it comes to my State North of Shoranur railway station, the tracks and the trains do not exist in the railway map. Right near my home-town there is a bridge called Feroke bridge, the photograph of which appeared in the newspapers and it has been said that that bridge is on the verge of collapse. Nothing has been done. I tried to find out what has been done to examine this bridge. If tomorrow it is reported to this House that I also met with a railway accident, don't be surprised. Kerala has always been neglected. For miles and miles, trains run without fans lights and lavatories in the compartments are in very bad shape. On the whole it is an anarchical situation in the trains in South, particularly in Kerala. Every year railway freights are increased travel rates are increased. What is happening to that money? You take a lot of money from us. What are you doing with that money? Are you spending it in your constituency? We pay for tickets. If you come to North, you will find more ticketless travellers than in the South. This is what is happening. You tell us that you are modernising the railways. You are entering 21st century. But if these trains run for centuries like this, I do not think, we will be entering the 21st century. That is the state of affairs. May I know from the Minister whether he would make a comprehensive study of the rail tracks in Kerala apart from what happened at Sasthankotta? What is happening in the entire area?

Madam, we have no faith in the railway enquiry ordered by the Railway Ministry. It is all white-wash affair. The Minister of Railways has threatened to resign on account of this tragic accident. In this connection I am reminded of an English proverb "Tickle me, Toby, I will tickle you." I know that it is an agreedgame. Apart from this enquiry, we want a judicial enquiry conducted by a High Court Judge preferably.

Madam, the local people have made a request to the local authorities that a monument should be built there to mark the great service, heroic and valiant service that they rendered to save many lives. I do not know whether this request has reached the railway administration. I want the Minister to react on this point also.

Thank you.

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV: Madam, I am on a point of order. You gave a chance to speak only to one Member from our side. I also gave my name. You should give me two minutes.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is the usual practice... *(Interruptions)*...

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV: You think that all Congressmen don't have voice. But they have voice and you don't have voice.

श्री राम चन्द्र विकल (उत्तर प्रदेश): मैंने भी अपना नाम दिया था ।

उपसभापति: प्रोसीजर फोलो करना चाहिए ।

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: You form a new party, you will get a chance.

उपसभापति: अब हो गया आप लोग बैठ जाइए, मंत्री जी जवाब दे रहे हैं ।

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam Deputy Chairman, I stand here with a sense of anguish on the tragedy that occurred on the 8th of July, 1988 in Kerala. On behalf of my colleague and the Railway Ministry, I would like to publicly and categorically state my feeling of great emotion on this particular incident and undoubtedly, all of us, from the seniormost to the juniormost feel a sense of moral responsibility.

[Shri Madhavrao Scindia]

Madam, my friend, Dr. Subramanian Swamy asked to defend my safety record. I think I will deal it later. I will deal with the salient features. All the details of the accident are well known to everyone. So I will not repeat them. I will just deal with the points raised by the hon. Members and though it seems many times futile and senseless to try and assert at times of such tragedy that the effort is sincere, I would again like to reiterate and reemphasize this as I answer the hon. Members.

Some points were raised by several Members regarding the enquiry to be conducted by the Commissioner of Railway Safety. I have clarified on several occasions in this House that the Commissioner of Railway Safety is a totally independent body under a different Ministry. (*Interruptions*). I have not interrupted you. So please do not interrupt me so that the trend of my thoughts is not broken. It is under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and we in the Railways would like to ensure its total independence. That is why when the Ministries were combined a few years ago under the Ministry of Transport, it was our suggestion that since the Ministry of Civil Aviation also came under the same Ministry of Transport, the Commissioner of Railway Safety should be moved out of the Ministry of Civil Aviation into either the Home Ministry or any other Ministry which is competent to deal with it but it should not be under the umbrella of the Transport Ministry so that its independence is ensured, so that we can learn from any fault that we may have committed, any lapses that may have taken place on our part. The Commissioner of Railway Safety is a highly technical body and the Authority was set up because the nature of railway accidents normally involves very complex technological matters. In the Commissioner of Railway Safety offices whether it is the Chief Commissioner or whether it is the Commissioner of Railway Safety, the total relationship with the Railways is immediately severed. They do not go back to the Railways. They have no further contact with the Railways once they are absorbed by this independent body and under section 84 of the Indian Railway Act, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation have framed rules captioned "Statutory Investigation into Railway Accident Rules 1973". Under this, a number of enquiries have been held. We have found that the enquiries have been extremely helpful to us and most of te recommendations have been adopted and implemented by the Indian Railways. The process also is much quicker and the entire enquiry into the accidents by the Commissioner of Railway Safety is in the nature of public enquiries in that wide publicity is given through the local press inviting the public to tender evidence bearing upon the accident being inquired into and the evidence and proceedings are constantly being flashed in the press. Over and above that, I would lie to mention to the hon. Members that in the last five years, of the 200 major recommendations that we have received as a result of railway accident inquiries from the Commissioner of Railway Safety, there were ten such suggestions that we did not entirely agree with. Twelve are pending due to various reasons, some may be due to technology problems, some may be due to money problems. For instance, a recommendation saying that all level-crossings of a certain category must immediately be converted into automatic crossings. Now, this is something we would like to do. But it would involve hundreds of crores of rupees. It would become impossible due to the financial limitations in implementing these proposals. There are about twelve such pending. Out of the 200 recommendations in the last five years, 178 have been adopted and implemented by the Indian Railways.

Over and above that, Madam, there is no secrecy in this particular report. The Commissioner of Railway Safety, as an hon. Member mentioned, comes under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The annual report of the Commissioner of Railway Safety is presented every year to Parliament and laid on the Table of the House. It contains all the [illegible] that he has

pinpointed as far as certain accidents, major accidents, are concerned and also his recommendations. So, through questions in Parliament, through discussions, through budget discussions, hon. Members of Parliament can easily check whether recommendations have been adopted and implemented. I think it is a very satisfactory method of expediting inquiries ensuring the technical level of the inquiring officer and also ensuring that it is an independent inquiry which helps the Indian Railways in their task.

Madam, there was talk about the track being bad, being not maintained in a satisfactory condition, and the number of rail fractures multiplying on the Indian Railway system. There was some mention of funding for renewal of railway tracks.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: And also contractors.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I am coming to that. I am very patient with you. I would request you to be patient with me. (*Interruptions*) I have stressed on many occasions in the past regarding the priorities in the Indian Railways. We have very very clearly defined guidelines and the first and the foremost priority which greatly impinges on railway safety is renewal of rolling stock and renewal of track. And if you were to glance at our budget and the budgetary allocations, I am sure no further argument would be required. An hon. Member talked about speeding up of trains. Madam, we learn a lot from the media and the press and most of the correspondents, most of the editors are highly responsible people who give us a lot of insight, sometimes into the railway working, give us an opportunity to self-analyse. But, unfortunately, there is a minority which tends to sensationalise matters. As far as the tracks are concerned, as far as the rolling stock is concerned, our priority, certainly will not be changed. There is one press report which said that the Indian Railways had speeded up trains. Now I consider it a black mark against the Indian Railways when I say in the House that Rajdhani Express which was cleared for 130 kmph in 1969 is today cleared only for 120 kmph, mail and express trains which were cleared twenty years ago for 110 kmph, most of them, are today running at 100 kmph and from 110 we have not been able to move forward at all. There is so much talk unfortunately of the Shathabdi Express. What have we done in the Shatabdi Express? We have moved only inches. from 130 kmph to 140 kmph; that too. between New Delhi and Agra and beyond that it does not go at 140. And Shatabadi Express is ultimately meant to be a train which joins capital to capital. Bhopal is the only capital, or I would say, is one of the very few capitals of a major State which is not connected by a direct train to New Delhi. Ultimately when electrification of the line which has reached up to Bina extends to Bhopal by te end of this year or by the end of this financial year. our ambition is to see that Shatabdi Express becomes the fastest train up to Bhopal giving connection from capital to capital. That policy, I believe, was laid down and enunciated many years ago by Pandit Kamalapati Tripathi when he was the Railway Minister. All I want to say is as far as moving at 140 kmph at a small stretch is concerned, a great part of credit is due to the RDSO and our engineers who managed to overcome the hurdles in our locomotives. The bogies were showing up cracks, and to produce a locomotive which could travel, in fact, up to 140 kmph is indeed an achievement. But though Shathabdi is cleared for 140 kmph, all I want to say is that our priority is not to produce only high-speed locomotives. We very clearly understand in the Indian Railways that basically we have to be a "work horse" railway. Our primary responsibility is to satisfy the millions of our people who have of necessity to travel on our system because there is no alternative. Our priority is to ensure that the bloodline, the veins of our national economy, keep flowing and the maximum amount of freight, especially essential freight, is moved. This work-horse philosophy will have to remain. We have allotted in the first three years between 20 and 25 per cent of our total Annual Plan for track renewal, as much as 33

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per cent of our total Annual Plan for renewal of rolling stock. Terefore, on these two head alone as much as 58 to 60 per cent of the total allocation of the Plan has spent and, in fact, the Railway Ministry and I have been the butt of much critism and justified criticism from honourable Members of Parliament who have asked for increased allocation on new lines. Now I am afraid we have to run the risk of unpopularity amongst Members of Parliament by ensuring, our priority first is restore the system to good health before a meaningful expansion of the system can take place'. Therefore, the maximum funds in our Budget have been given on these two heads. I would like to assure the House that this work-horse philosophy will prevail and will continue in future also. We know our responsibilities. We certainly have no propensities to indulge in fancy gimmicks. Unfortunately very small minority amongst the media do try and sensationalise certain efforts which are in the direction of a boost to the morale, a feeling of confidence 'Yes, we can also improve our railways to some extent.

The matter about railway contractors was also raised by the honourable Member. No item of regular track maintenance is being done by contract except on a very very experimental basis in a very small way; also not direct track maintenance, but of the nature of deep screening of ballast, supply of ballast and that sort of thing. So I do not think it would be right to say that we are handing this maintenance work over to contractors; especially in this area no contractor was at work..Some honourable Members, many of them, mentioned that there was 4.00 P.M. no interim report yet, that there was no indication even in my statement as to what the reasons could be. We ourselves are still awating the report of the Railway Safety Commissioner which is due within a short time. He already started the inquiry, I think, on the 15th of July, and I would not like to say anything which may vitiate the inquiry. All I can say is that *prima facie* the bridge does no seem to be involved and the derailment seems to have taken place before the bridge.

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : महोदया, फिर ब्रिज के टूटने की खबर कैसे आई। यह खबर रेडियो पर भी आई और टेलीविजन पर भी आई ।

श्री माधव राव सिंधिया : मेरे ख्याल में मेरे साथी मिनिस्टर आफ इनफारमेशन एंड ब्राडकास्टिंग से इसका जवाब लेना पड़ेगा क्योंकि मैं टी.वी. रिपोर्ट मानिटर नहीं करता और हमारी जो प्राइमा फेसी फाइंडिंग है उस पर मैं थोड़ा सा प्रकाश डाल रहा हूं ।

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : यह सरकार है या चू चूं का मुरब्बा है ?

श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलुवालिया : (बिहार) : वह तो खा लिया आपने 1977 में (**व्यवधान**)

श्री सीताराम केसरी (बिहार) : अटल जी आप भी जनता पार्टी की सरकार में मंत्री रहे है ।

श्री कैलाश पति मिश्र : महोदयामैं ने एक प्रश्न किया था उसका जवाब नही आया ।

उपसभापति : आपने प्रश्न पूछ लिया है अब जवाब दिया जा रहा है आप बैठ जाइये ।

श्री कैलाशपति मिश्र : लेकिन उत्तर नहीं आ रहा है । मद्रास मेल के चीफ गार्ड का कम्पलेंड आ गया है या नही इसका उत्तर कुछ नहीं दिया है । मैं जानना चाहता हूं ।

श्री माधव राव सिंधिया : मैं उत्तर दे रहा हूं अभी तक बेबी साहब तक पहुंचा हूं । इसके बाद कैलाशपति जी का जवाब भी आयेगा थोड़ा धैर्य रखये ।

Madam, I was saying that as far as this bridge was concerned, it is a fairly new bridge. It was regirdered in 1973 for Broad Gauge specifications and constant inspection takes place. This bridge too came under that programme. The bridge was last inspected on the 12th

April 1988. Of course, there are inspections everyday which the gangman and the patrol man keep doing. But by an engineer, by the AEN, it was last inspected as recently as 12th April 1988. The track was renewed and relaid in 1983-84. So, it is, what I would call, a very new track because track life, I think, is about thirty-five or forty years depending on the traffic that it takes. The track recording car was run on this section on the 21st January 1988 and the track geometry was found to be in a satisfactory condition. The accelerometer recording on this section was last carried and on the 10th March 1988 wherein acceleration values were observed to be less than 0.2g which indicated the satisfactory conditon of the track. The track had been last inspected by the Permanent Way Inspector on the 7th of July 1988 which is one day prior to the accident and by the Assistant and Divisional Engineer on the 25th June 1988.

Now, I come to the point which Kailash Patiji has raised. Madam, the Guard of the Trivandrum Mail which eperienced a jerk about a kilometre-and-a-half or two kilometres prior to the spot where the accident took place on the 30th June 1988. had advised the Station Master, Sathankottai about this jerk who immediately thereafter informed the Permanent Way Inspector and a Caution Order was issued to four goods trains wich had passed through the section after the report made by the Guard. The Caution Order means: bringing the speed limit right down. After that the track was closely inspected by the P.W.I. and was again found in a satisfactory condition. Therefore, that position is normally held until the inspection is done. And once the inspection clears it, the caution is lifted and the speed limit again restored. So I do not think that that particular jerk was relevant to the accident. But I would not like to made a categorical statement because I do not want to vitiate the inquiry which is taking place.

Madam, there is a feeling on the part of some people that Kerala is being neglected as far as the Railways are concerned. I seem to have a certain colleague in Kerala designated as the Kerala Railway Minister, Mr. Nadar. It is most unfortunate that he has taken recourse to all sorts of statements. I very hesitatingly and after much study and after being totally convinced by my officers make any statements, because I am not a professional and I am not entitled to make statements about vehicles tracks and coaches until I am convinced by engineers and other people who are technically qualified. It is most unfortunate that a person holding such a position has made such statement. However, he may be having his own reasons. I can say that in 1986 and again in 1987 Kerala is a State where the largest number of new railway services have been started. Way back in 1982, six years back ..

SHRI N. E. BALARAM (Kerala): I deny this. (*Interruptions*) You can say such things outside, not in Parliament. I deny that.. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: The hon. Member can only refute the statement. It is only I can deny, since I have made the statement... (*Interruptions*).

Six years back, in 1982, all the services in Kerala were dieselised. There are many States in this country where even now steam services are plying, not in Kerala. So I do not think that it is entirely fair to say that Kerala has been neglected as far as the Railway services are concerned. The expectations, aspirations and hopes have rached a tremendous level. And naturally due to resource limitations, due to other limitations, it becomes impossible to fully satisfy everyone. But to completely brush all that has been done under the carpet for Kerala, I do not think is a very fair stand to take.

Madam, a question was asked as to when I left for Trivandrum. We came to know about the accident at about 3.30 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon, after which I immediately tried to make arrangements for an aircraft Originally I had planned to take off at about 7 o'clock or thereabout. But there are problems sometimes in procuring an aircraft, the aircraft crew, getting the necessary clearance and refuelling

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in making the aircraft fit to fly, and so on. We could get the aircraft only at 10 o'clock, though I was ready to leave earlier. But it is unfortunate that due to the aircraft not being ready in time and in spite of everyone doing his best, I could take off at 10 o'clock. We landed at Trivandrum at 3.30 in the morning in a non-stop flight and we reached the accident spot, I think, at roundabout 6 in the morning. So, we did our best to reach as soon as possible. The Chairman, Railway Board, was with me and my colleague Mr. Krishna Kumar also travelled in the aircraft. It was too small an aircraft to take other hon. Member of Parliament and other ministers who wanted to visit the site. I could not take them. The aircraft was much too small.

Madam, about the implementation of the recommendations of various committees, I have just mentioned that out of 200 and odd recommendations of the Commissioner for Railway Safety, we have implemented as many as 178. The Sikri Committee was the latest committee. The Sarin Committee reviewed the Wanchoo Committee and the Kunzroo Committee. The Sikri Committee was the last expert committee which focussed attention only on railway safety. The Sikri Committee made 583 recommendations of which 54 were in the nature of observations. Seventy of these recommendations on various aspects were not accepted. A total of 459 recommendations were accepted out of which 429 have been implemented.

Shri Sivaji mentioned about the Mancherial accident. I would like to remined him that it was because of flash floods from a tank. The railways were not informed about it. Normally, the Railways are informed about such tanks by the State Gvot. and it is examined from the safety angle.

Mr. Aladi Aruna talked about some *ex-gratia* payments as a token of our appreciation to the very brave fishermen who undoubtedly were a great source of help. I have already paid tributes to them. The same plea has been put forward by my colleague Mr. Krishna Kumar and Mr. Karunakaran from Kerala. I had told them that I would certainly contemplate a donation if a particular association or a cooperative or an association of these fishermen could be pointed out to me. That dialogue is still on and I would be very happy to help them.

SHRI M. A. BABY: Would you consider giving some job to the relatives?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, certainly the Civil Administration means the Government of Kerala. It is a part of the Government of Kerala. As far as the district administration is concerned, it represents the Government of Kerala. I expressed my deep appreciation of the alert civic adminsitration which responeded so quickly. Obviously, the civil administration is an integral part of the Kerala State Government. I would be the last person to politicise such a tragedy I mentioned the local administration. I also mentioned the name of te Kerala Chief Minister.

Mr. Virendra Verma asked that more should be given to the kith and kin of the dead and the injured persons. I think that some hon. Member clarified to him that what has been given is only an *ex-gratia* grant. The *Ad hoc* Claims Commissioner will be appointed in consultation with the State Government. He will determine as to how much compensation should be given to the successors or the heirs. A total of Rs. 1 lakh will be given to the kith and kin of the dead. For the injured, the amounts vary from Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 100,000/-. This amount is to be determined by the *Ad hoc* Claims Commissioner.

I think I have covered all the points more or less except the point raised by my dear friend, Dr. Subramanian Swamy. I feel very hesitant... (*Interruptions*)... I request the Members to please take this seriously because I am not really in a mood for fun and frolic as far as this accident is concerned.

Madam, Dr. Swamy asked me to talk a little about the safety record. I very much hesitate to do so because figures

and statistics seem so hollow at a time like this. And one feels a bit awkward to try to talk about statistics which point to an improved performance, not a performance with which we are satisfied, but certainly an improved performance. What has happened is undoubtedly something which has had a very, very grave impact on all our minds. It weights very heavily on us. But the fact of the matter is that the Indian Railways in the last three years have been showing a steady trend of improvement as far as railway accidents are concerned. I am only now talking about this because Dr. Swamy has raised it. I would like to say that in the year 1985-86, the least number of railway accidents in the Indian Railway history occurred. In 1986-87, there was a further improvement on 1985-86 by about 10 per cent. And the last financial year, 1987-88 has again shown an even greater improvement, and we have reached a new low in 1987-88 as far as railway accidents are concerned. I would like to mention to hon. Members that sometimes much blame is laid on the railway staff. When you talk about the percentages, what is the percentage of number of accidents for which the Railway staff can be blamed? Naturally that percentage does not vary because even if the figure reduces, the percetage more or less remains the same though the total number may have decreased. Therefore, if we want to really judge the performance of the Railway staff and the efforts from the senior-most to the junior-most on the Railway system. I think, the best measure would be to measure the incidence of accidents per million train kms attributable to the Railway Staff. This figure was as high as 0.952 in 1983-84. It has come down to 0.651 in the last financial year which, I think -- you are much stronger in mathematics than I am -- will be about 30 to 40 per cent improvement. So, the refresher courses, the training courses, the seminars, the creation of an awareness of responsibility seem to be having some effect.

I would also like to give the hon. Members a comparison with some international railways. As far as the Railways are concerned, again the best method would be to measure accidents per million train kms. In a very recent publication of the 'Progressive Rail Roading' which is an internationally reputed magazine, they mentioned — I quote that "the Comadian Railways in the late 1987 was headed for further gains in safety. They have logged the safest year in 1986, and the best record amongst comparable North American class one railroads." That means, they have been the first, the best railroad in North America as far as railway accidents are concerned. Then they go on to say, "Through October, there have been 1.77 train accidents per million train miles compared to 2.20 in 1986". Now, if I reduce this to kilo-metres, in 1986, the Canadian Pacific which was supposed to be the best record in the North American continent recorded 126 accidents per million train kms. Our record in 1986-87 was 1.10. Similarly, in 1987 they brought it down from 1.26 to 1.10 We went further down to 1.02, which is as much as 10 per cent better performance than them without the technology or the resources that they possess. I would like again to clarify here that their accidents do not include railway crossing accidents, because they consider them as road accidents, but here in India we consider them as rail accidents. In India it is between 60 and 65 now in the last two years. In a country like Japan it is something like 700 and in the USA something like six or seven thousand accidents on railway crossings are reported every year. Again I am not trying to detract from the mood of seriousness that we have adopted as far as our approach to railway safety is concerned. There is no question of any complacency. Similar comparisons can be made with the British railways. I would like to remind you that while our figure is 1.02, the figure of the British railways is 1.88, and Japanese railways 1.36, German Federal Railways 1.54, and more comparable railways, a railways of the sub-continent, the Pakistan railways, is 12.45. (*Interruptions*). I do not have the figures about Italy, but as far as France is concerned, France has a better record than we have, it is 0.88, better than our record is, as far as million train kilometres are concerned.

I would like to say and I would like the hon. Members to know, that there

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has been an improvement of railway safety. We have certainly not reached anywhere near what we consider a satisfactory point and no complacency will be allowed to creep in, we will try to improve continuously in the future also. There will be no effort spared on our part and none of our priorities will change, although a very small section of our media has kept talking about it, which is totally devoid of any truth, our priorities will remain and the health of the Indian railways will be restored first before we can think of major allocations to technology which does not contribute to the work horse concept. Even things like TGV, what we have signed with France, what we have signed with Japan, about prefeasibility studies and later feasibility studies for the Delhi-Kanpur route, for very fast trains, on either mixed routes, or dedicated routes, even those efforts will be submitted to us and a decision will be taken and I was very careful to emphasize this in France, that a decision will be taken only if it is considered economically viable and feasible. In France they have borrowed from the market. They have not taken the budgetary support. The TGV has been funded by floating bonds in the market and the entire calculation is a commercial calculation. They are making a profit even after the pay back amount is kept aside and interest, I think 17 per cent or 20 per cent, I do not know what the market interest is, is being paid. So, if such a situation arises then we could think of possibly raising funds in the market. But this is something on which possibly we can take a decision only in the middle or the end of the Eighth Plan. And even then another criteria will also have to apply as to whether we are dipping into a pool of resources which could have been used for something else. So, all these matters will have to be given very very serious consideration. We are certainly not going forward in a flashy, gimmicky way. We have our feet solidly on the ground and on the railway tracks and our priorities are to restore the system to good health. The time has come when I think we should start thinking of a meaningful expansion of the system because there may be problems of capacity in the Eighth Plan, if we do not now expand in a meaningful manner. But that is a decision which has yet to be taken. As far as our priorities are concerned, it will be total safety, it will be total rehabilitation, it will be total renewal of rolling stock. It will be totally to go in a major way into high technology areas which increase our capacity to move freight, which increases our total capacity of moving passengers and the work horse concept will always be adopted. I would, once again, thank the hon. Members for their valuable suggestions. I can assure them that our feeling of anguish is extremely great. We have been greatly affected by this very grave tragedy. Our hearts go out to the bereaved families. My colleague Mahabir Prasadji and myself and our entire Railways staff are most saddened and dispirited by this tragedy and our deepest sympathies go to those who have been affected. Thank you.

STATUTORY RESOLUTION APPROVING CONTINUANCE OF PRESIDENT'S PROCLAMATION IN RELATION TO TAMIL NADU— Cont'd.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now resume discussion on the Statutory Resolution. Mr Subrmanian Swamy.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM: I am on a point of order. While moving the Resolution in the morning, the hon. Minister said that he received a report from the Governor of Tamil Nadu for extending President's rule for another six months. My point is, last time also, we received copy of the report of the Governor but this time, copy of the Governor's report has not been circulated to the Members which is essential for a discussion. So, I request the Chair to kindly ask the hon. Minister to supply copy of the report of the Governor so that at least tomorrow the discussion will be more fruitful and useful.